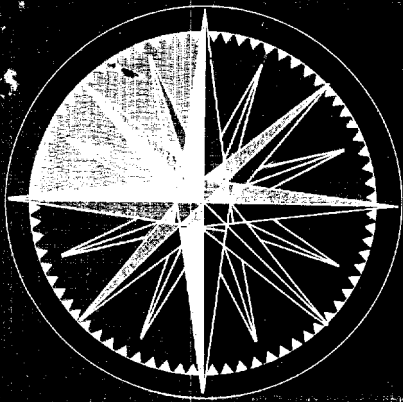


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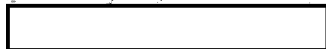
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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SPECIAL REPORT

ITALIAN COMMUNISTS FACE DOMESTIC PROBLEMS

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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ITALIAN COMMUNISTS FACE DOMESTIC PROBLEMS

Italy's Communist Party--the largest Communist party in Western Europe--faces a number of problems for which there appear to be no immediate solutions. The viability of the center-left governing coalition and the recent unification of its Socialist and Social Democratic parties are accentuating the Communists' political isolation. The party is also suffering from dissension within its leadership, a declining membership, minor defections by "pro-Chinese" elements, and financial difficulties. Party leaders are looking for ways to shore up the party's administrative structure and refurbish its electoral appeal. What effect all this will have on the party's national strength may not be apparent before the 1968 national election. At this stage, however, the Communists' position as Italy's second largest vote-getter does not appear seriously threatened, and it is unlikely that any major party split is imminent or that any large percentage of its electorate will desert the party in the next few years.

Isolation: The Principal Dilemma

The Italian Communist Party (PCI) has increased its share of the popular vote in every national election since World War II (from 19 percent in 1946 to 25.3 percent in 1963), but the party cannot hope to achieve power by itself. Its chance of entering the national government through the electoral process has long depended on its maintaining old alliances, or establishing new ones. The Socialist Party (PSI), however, abandoned its "unity of action pact" with the Communists in 1957, and went on to participate in the center-left government in 1963. Communist Party efforts to find new allies among Italy's Catholic forces have not proved fruitful.

The Socialists' recent unification with the Social Democrats

(PSDI)--who had split off from the PSI in 1947 over the issue of collaboration with PCI--has further isolated the Communists and reduced any hope they may have had for reconstituting Socialist-Communist collaboration. Socialist unification further threatens Communist power at the local level, where a sharp reduction in the number of joint Communist-Socialist municipal and provincial administrations is in prospect. PCI leaders must now worry over whether the unified Socialist party will be successful enough to lessen the PCI's appeal to the many who cast a protest vote for Communists because of political, economic, and social injustices rather than ideological conviction.

Search for a Strategy

In the face of Socialist unification, the PCI has tried to

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find a way to some form of alliance with the Socialists and the Christian Democratic (DC) left while still portraying itself to its industrial and rural base as an irreconcilable party of opposition and future revolution. As a result, in 1966 the PCI appears neither democratic nor revolutionary. The party's road is blocked at both ends. The Socialists have rejected all PCI advances and a new series of political strikes like those of the late 1940s and early 1950s would at this stage clearly be unprofitable. For the present, it appears that the PCI must wait for a center-left crisis. Meanwhile it continues to denounce the government's program without offering a real alternative and without the capability to put an alternative into effect.

PCI leaders are likely to avoid an all-out attack on the PSI-PSDI as they seek to mask the party's immobility and are likely to arouse a renewed militancy among their supporters by concentrating their attacks on Christian Democratic "corruption, failures, and incompetence." The Communists are reportedly alert to the danger this tactic poses for their party. It may cause further disillusionment among the party's middle-echelon officials who want the PCI to lash out at the Socialists as traitors to, and dividers of, the working class. Most of the Communist leadership, however, appear to believe that the only practical course at this moment is to try to appear accommodating to the unified Socialists.

The PCI central committee has reportedly considered trying to establish an "open dialogue" with the PSI-PSDI. Last June, PCI leader Luigi Longo hinted at this in a magazine interview. He affirmed his party's willingness to help other parties realize specific political points and programs outside a general political alliance, implying that the PSDI could be considered a party of the left.

The open dialogue tactic, however, has not yet shaped up as a coherent PCI policy, and the party is likely to continue to look for opportunities to criticize democratic socialism, and to play up any difficulties the PSI-PSDI may experience in consolidating their merger. Last month, for example, in the Communist daily *l'Unita*, a PCI leader described the unified Socialists' president, Pietro Nenni, as "an anti-Communist" of the worst social-democratic type. The new party, he charged, was full of contradictions which would soon lead to dissension.

A Sterile Debate?

A long-standing tactical debate between two leading PCI political office members, Giorgio Amendola and Pietro Ingrao, is likely to complicate the search for a coherent policy regarding the PSI-PSDI merger. In general, the debate centers on varying approaches to the PCI's well-worn popular-front tactic. The differences between Amendola and Ingrao are as much on priorities as on substance.

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Ingrao is in a hurry; he believes time is running against the party. The PCI militants, he argues, are growing softer and fewer. The center-left formula has succeeded in splitting the Italian left and the "monopolists" are buying off the protest voters who have heretofore supported the Communists. Consequently, Ingrao urges a concentrated effort to strike a bargain with left-wing Catholics. He would try to split them off from the Catholic conservatives and to seek power with all those who could find common ground around a reform-oriented program--a "model of development of Italian society."

Amendola, on the other hand, denies the PCI's need to offer a model of development. He sees time on the party's side, citing the PCI's success in the steady development of its electoral base. He urges a continuing emphasis on wooing the non-Catholic left, with the eventual aim of creating a broad popular front which would ultimately challenge the Christian Democrats' primacy in Italian politics.

Amendola reportedly said recently that major emphasis should be put on PCI relations with the Socialist forces, even if the unification of the PSI-PSDI is taking place on a Social-Democratic platform. The PCI, he argues, must establish rapport and a measure of cooperation with the leadership of the unified party. Amendola also favors establishing ties with the Christian Democratic groups in power; however, this would come about only after the Christian

Democrats had been handed a lesson through a severe electoral setback, perhaps in 1968.

The PCI National Congress last January failed to resolve satisfactorily the Amendola-Ingrao controversy. The congress rejected Ingrao's efforts to force the pace, but Ingrao's criticism, in effect, highlighted the fact that some elements of the party share his fear that time is running out.

Confusion in the Ranks

The PCI's difficulties in evolving a coherent policy to meet the double challenge posed by the center-left coalition and Socialist unification has apparently confused the rank and file. The leadership's criticism of social democracy coupled with a seemingly more indulgent attitude toward the unified PSI-PSDI is puzzling to some party members who fear that the leadership may be going too far, too fast toward cooperating with "right-wing" forces. There seems to be also a more general feeling of a lack of communication between the leadership and the party faithful, particularly the younger members.

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Serious organizational problems could evolve from the confusion at the national and provincial leadership levels. At present, PCI chiefs must try to minimize the friction generated by elements in the party which have taken sides in, or have been affected by, the Sino-Soviet quarrel.

party leaders are concerned by the "dispersion" or "crumbling" of support in lower level ranks and the "state of mind" in some of the middle echelons brought on by the sharp exchanges between the Chinese and the Soviets. The effect within the party of the Sino-Soviet conflict is apparently worrying the leadership more than the widely publicized recent activities of pro-Chinese dissidents who have left the party.

Dissident Communists

The PCI's tendency to be adaptive, to become more revisionist and appear more reasonable,

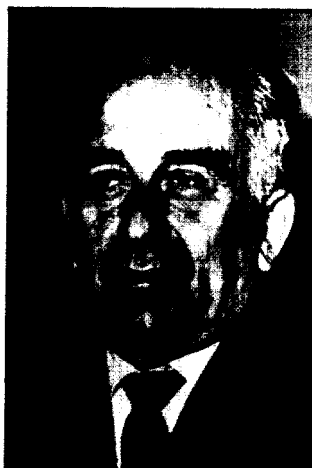
has opened opportunities on the party's left for those who advocate a harder line. Proponents of this line are the far left Proletarian Socialist Party (PSIUP) and small, increasingly volatile pro-Chinese groups in and out of the PCI. These groups are splintered and tiny, but their existence causes the PCI some embarrassment.

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In October, a group of pro-Chinese announced the formation of a "Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Italy (PCI-ML)" at Livorno. Chinese Communist officials in Bern are encouraging the dissidents.

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The three main groups of declared partisans of Peking--comprising perhaps one or two thousand members--are bitterly contending among themselves, possess no leaders of note or distinction, and pose very little threat to the PCI. The fact that the Nuova Unita group has just declared itself a "party" appears of little consequence. There was some resistance to the move on grounds that it would in the end expose the thinness of the pro-Chinese ranks.

The PCI has also been recently embarrassed by dissident Communists in the south. In September the party expelled Senator Luca De Luca of Calabria for "moral and political unworthiness." While De Luca has no national importance, his case emphasizes the party's special problems in the south. Party militants there seem to believe they are unduly cut off from the leadership in Rome and are more susceptible to arguments that the PCI's "revolutionary spirit" is waning. They also are frustrated by the fact that the party participates much less in local government in the south than in the center and north.

Other Problems

The PCI's problems tend to compound. According to its organizational chief, party membership is now 1,575,000--slightly below the 1965 figure of about 1,615,000. He reportedly expressed serious concern over the

membership situation, noting a decided decline in the number of younger members and workers in the party in addition to weaknesses in the South and in the major cities.

The PCI is also having some financial difficulty, the most dramatic evidence of which is the recent decision to discontinue the Rome edition of l'Unita and depend on Milan for the entire national distribution. Party Secretary Longo has reportedly cited low sales, but the move may also be related to dissension within the leadership. The fact that the PCI has decided to save money now--at such a crucial time for the party and at the expense of a much less effective press in half the country--may indicate that the PCI is harder up than usual.

Outlook

The PCI's strong position in Italian politics is not menaced at present. However, it is apparent that the party does not have satisfactory answers to its problems. The Communists fear and oppose the center-left, the unified Socialist party, and the isolation into which the party is being forced. They cannot, however, control the dynamics of the political situation which is responsible for the trend.

The fortunes of the PCI depend to a large degree on the

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success or failure of the center-left formula. They are even more dependent on the party's leadership--particularly on its ability to recognize problems that concern the electorate. To get anywhere, the party will somehow have to convince greater numbers that it is the champion of the people and that the forces in power are incompetent bureaucrats who are keeping the fruits of prosperity from the people.

If a crisis within the PCI is in prospect, it is probably at least a few years off. If Italy's economic prosperity continues, if the center-left government achieves some of its principal reforms, and if the unified Socialist party shows some growth potential, a diminution of the Communist vote in 1968 is possible. It is unlikely, however, that any large percentage of Communist voters will desert the party in the next few years.

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